

Performance Appraisal as a Tool for Increased Productivity in the Nigerian Public Service

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Abstract

The importance of performance appraisal in enhancing worker's motivation and productivity cannot be overstressed. Performance appraisal of employees has the advantage of helping an organization to position the workforce in the jobs for which they are best suited and thus leading to improved productivity and increased productivity. This paper examines performance appraisal as a tool for increased productivity in the Nigerian Public Service. The study builds its theoretical framework from Max Webber's concept of bureaucracy which is one important medium of actualizing productivity in the Nigerian Public Service. It adopts ex post facto research. Data is obtained from primary sources and explained using content analysis. The result from discussion shows that performance appraisal cannot yield maximum productivity if there are no regular check-ins of staff performance, aligned objectives to employees and a fixed time for feedback, to crown it all a time-to-time reward and recognition, remuneration scheme should not be set up, and this will place the Nigerian public service amongst the best in the world.

Keywords: *Performance appraisal, Productivity, Bureaucracy, Nigerian public service*

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Background to the Study

Public services in developed and developing countries are no longer comfortable with just remaining competitive in their Ministry or parastatals, they seek to enhance the productive capacity of their workers. They aspire to establish competitive superiority over time and to improve productivity to both professionals and other employees. To achieve this, the Nigerian Public Service Commission requires thorough performance appraisal of the entire workforce to enable the public servants acquire the right skills in the task for optimum productivity.

Performance appraisal is therefore significant in improving the capacity of public servants. Anam (2014), noted that it has the capacity to provide adequate feedback to each person on his or her performance, serve as a basis for modifying or changing behavior towards more effective working habits both in private and the Nigerian Public Service and provide to provide data to officers with which they may use to judge future job assessment and compensations. It is therefore no longer fashionable to deploy employees to tasks without determining their suitability for each job.

This work will carefully analyze the meaning and scope of performance appraisal to the Nigerian Public Service, drawing some instances from Max Webber's concept of bureaucracy which is one important medium of actualizing productivity in the Nigerian Public Service. The study adopts ex post facto research. Data is obtained from primary sources and explained using content analysis.

Literature Review

Performance appraisal is an evaluation of an employee's job performance over a specific period of time (Donli 2008). It is the equivalent of a report card on an employee and how their managers assess their performance over the prior year. Anyone who has worked in more than one department or in more than one company will attest to the fact that not all performance appraisal processes are the same even in the Nigerian Public Service. The varying systems and processes are applicable to many organizations. Unfortunately, some are done so poorly that they are not only designed to fail but also to create a negative experience for both the manager as well as the employee.

According to Cooper (1997), performance appraisal can be seen as a method by which the performance and productivity of each worker is measured in order to determine his or her contribution to the effort of the organization towards the achievement of set goals and objectives. Performance appraisal is also carried out for the purpose of promotion and transfer to new job tasks and position within an organization (Edman, 2009).

Performance appraisal is that part of performance management process which an employee's contribution to the organization, during a specific period is assessed. According to Mullius (2002), the underlying objective of performance appraisal is to improve the performance of individual employee, thereby leading to improvement in the performance of the organization as a whole. As noted by Matthias and Jackson (2008) a performance appraisal system is often the link between additional pay and rewards that employees receive and their Job performance.

In the Nigerian public service, performance appraisal can improve motivation and performance, but if used inappropriately, it can have disastrous effects (Fisher et al, 2003). Therefore, for performance appraisal to be effective, it must of necessity be anchored on the performance criteria that have been outlined for the job. Riggio (2003), describes performance criteria as the means of determining successful or unsuccessful job performance.

The Nigerian Public Sector as a Bureaucracy

The roots of the early Nigerian Public service could be traced to 1987 when Mr. Y. Beecroft was appointed Consul for the Bights Benin and Biafra was headquarters in Fernando Po, which was then a Spanish Colony. The responsibilities of the Consul then were essentially those of prosecuting legitimate commercial treaties. However, by 1863, the consular jurisdiction of Beecroft and Campbell was exercised over the British subjects through the use of consular courts and other courts of equity, over persons enjoying the protection of the crown.

The Nigeria Government Bureaucracy is the public service. This is because the government at whatever level enunciates and implements its policies, programmes and projects through the instrumentality of the public service. The public service can therefore be safely referred to as a bureaucracy.

Max Weber conceptualized the concept of bureaucracy which he described as the most efficient administrative organization for the conduct of the affairs of the government. His conceptualization and typication of bureaucracy today, provide to a large extent, the framework for discussing and understanding the basics and functions of organizations. In his entustic analysis of this inevitable concept, Weber describes it as the only concept that guarantees efficiency and effectiveness to organizations, especially government organizations. To further elucidate the point being made and present a clearer picture of the concept of bureaucracy and modalities for its operators, Weber goes further to provide in his rationale – 'legal model', the following distinctive characteristics of bureaucracy.

1. The regular activities for the purposes of the bureaucracy governed structure are distributed in a fixed way as official duties.
2. The positions or offices are organized into hierarchical authority and responsibilities structure.
3. A formally established system of rules and regulations governs official decisions and actions.
4. Officials are expected to organize or assume impersonal orientation in their contacts with clients and with other officials.
5. Employment by the organization constitutes careers for officials (Anam, 2014).

The public service could be referred to as a formal organization given its origin, evolution, characteristics and roles. In that wise, an examination as a formal organization will further illuminate the public service of a concept. A formal organization can be perceived as:

- (a) A deliberate creation by man to achieve certain objectives.

- (b) The co-ordination of different activities. This fit adequately with the perception of Bobbit et al (1974) to the effect that formal organizations are those organizations that are deliberately established and goal-seeking.

Etzioni (1964), posits formal organizations as social units (or human groupings) deliberately constructed or reconstructed to seek specific goals. Examples here include; corporation, the Army, schools, hospitals and prisons. The common denominator among these definitions is the pursuits of specific goals and objectives. It is thus, on that premise that we agree with Hicks and Gullet (1982) that persons have individual objectives that they often can best achieve within the organizations. The formal organization can easily be described as “Legion” for they are many. In fact, within formal organizations could emerge other forms of formal organizations? A sort of master-servant relationship could exist between two organizations in which the second emerged from or was created by the first.

In the Nigerian public service, such a relationship is sometimes seen to exist between a given ministry and its parastatals. For instance, in a deliberate attempt to enhance the realization of the corporate mandate of the Federal Ministry of transport in Nigeria, such agencies or parastatals as the Nigeria railway corporation, Nigeria Ports Authority etc. are created. Between the ministry of transport and the Nigerian Railway Corporation exist a link or control system that holds them together with the result that is while the corporation or parastatals is a semi-autonomous entity, the ministry is the overseer of such parastatals.

The public service is defined by the Nigerian Constitution as “The service of the federation in any capacity in respect of and there shall be a Civil service of the federation. Most public service organizations, particularly the civil service, unlike the private sector organizations, are service-oriented. And social obligation is about the most pronounced responsibility of government to its citizenry. There is a category of public sector service organizations which Okigbo (1986) refers to as QUANGO (Quasi National Governmental Organizations). These are set up by the government to carry out specific tasks or purposes, to provide utility services – that lumped together under the name parastatals. Okigbo argues that Nigeria copied the British in the institution of these QUANGOS where semi-commercial undertakings of government are hired out and allowed to operate outside the civil service rules and regulations. The idea being that greater freedom of action is required in these undertakings and quicker decisions and decision making will promote their efficiency (Okigbo, 1986).

The sum total of our exploration is the basic element or organizations such as the public service are Goals and people. Hence, very important ingredients in an organization are the 'men' and 'women' in such an organization. Attempts to galvanize the efforts of people who make up an organization is the goal of the subject or personnel to people in formal organizations, most of whom are employed mainly for the realization of the goals of the organization.

However, employees have their own desires since work is generally seen not as an end in itself but a means to an end. So, the employee in an organization is there hoping that in helping to

achieve the objectives of the organization, conditions or opportunities would be created for him to realize his own aspirations. Personnel management thus involves a host of activities aimed at guiding, directing and motivating the employees of an enterprise towards the accomplishment of the goals of the enterprise while also helping them collectively or severally to achieve their own personal aspirations.

Two critical responsibilities are therefore placed in the management of every organization, these are:

1. To guide the human elements in realizing the organizational goal and
2. To help individual or employee to realize his own aspiration within the context of the organizational goals.

Base on the foregoing, the received wisdom regarding the critically and centrality of employees in organization seems to be in place. This led Adams Smith to pronounce that “The wealth of any Nation is the organized society” just as Karl Marx pronounced that “labour produces wealth”. As earlier stated, the Nigeria public service constitutes a vital instrument with which the government of the day implements its policies, programmes and service is situated within an environment which is in a state of constant flux. For instance, the public service immediate environment involves a complex geopolitical, social, economic, educational, regional and religious factor which exerts considerable influence on its managers. The rapid changes in the economy, technology and society have enormous implications for the public service. This implication, of course, is a corresponding change in the service itself in response to environmental changes.

Infact, it is an acceptable phenomenon that the most consistent thing in the world is change. Changes within the service, in order to adapt to environmental changes, are what we refer to as Reforms. Reforms are positive. They normally usher in re-organizations, and in the public service, this is occasioned by a gradual but steady increase in the complexity of government business which has shifted its focus from “Law and Order Administration” to “Development Administration”. This shift thus pre-supposes an overall management efficiency and effectiveness as well as increased efficiency in the implementation of government policies and programmes. Another reason for the prescription and adoption of reforms as treatment variable appears to be the below expectation performance of government institutions and agencies which come under the broad canopy of the public service observers and commentators on the public service are most unanimous in attributing the imposition of reforms on the public service to its lack-luster performance.

The extent literature on Nigerian Public sector administration has referred to all efforts made at improving the administrative reforms. In an apparent confirmation of this position, John Quah (1976) refers to efficiency and effectiveness engineering in the public service as a deliberate attempt to change both the structure and procedures of the public bureaucracies involved, in order to promote organizational effectiveness and attain national developmental goals. In support, Ham Been (1970) argues that administrative system with a conscious view to improving the system for positive goals of national development. Administrative reform

actions are thus needed for developmental process designed to give the administrative capacity needed in the public service as a common denominator to all development efforts. Hence, Jelawick (1982) consequently outlined components of administrative reforms action upon which the prospect of any reform action could be evaluated- definition of the objectives of the reforms, maximum information, critical analysis, drafting of project, choice of best solution and application of solutions.

Up till today, Panels upon panels are still being set up to reorganize the public service. To justify this, Dotun Philips (1988) posits that the public service is the major instrument with which to implement government policies and as the primary and private instrument of government and its nature, effectiveness and response cannot escape the constant attention of the government which is intent in fulfilling its pledge to the people.

Performance Appraisal as a Tool for Increased Productivity in Nigerian Public Service

Performance appraisal is a strategic factor or condition necessary for the growth and survival of any organization. it is believed that both the public service and employee needs to know how well actual performance is contributing to the accomplishment of the job plans the staffing plan, and the overall strategic plan of the public service in Nigeria (Inyang, 2000). For productivity to be actualized in the public service, there has to be an effective performance appraisal network. The question is how?

According to Nwachukwu (1985), the essence of performance appraisal is to give information for the promotion, demotion, transfer, pay increase training and development and discharge of an employee. Second, performance appraisal provides public servants with contractive on how they are performing in their jobs as viewed by their managers, thus leading to increased productivity.

It is important to note that rapid capacity building to meet development goals is felt almost everywhere and particularly so I the developing countries. In the Nigerian Public Service, staff training and developing had not received the desired attention judging by the participation rates and the low levels of investing in Human capital development. Tracy Goss (1996:133) suggest the need to acquire the capacity to make the impossible happen. Some informed observers in Nigeria e.g. Odozi (1996) in making use of human resource development has argued that even in terms of economic recession and financial sector, distress such as we are now in, the need for training, knowledge, skills and sharing of experiences for better management of internal and external environments of financial and other institution remains relevant, even compelling.

Similarly, Suleiman (1996) is making a case for a paradigm shift in managing Nigerian's economic agenda placed utmost emphasis on the human resources by arguing that “the good news is that we have all it takes, abundant natural resources, an energetic population and large potentially rich market.

Herbison (1994) observed that a strategy for human development resource development, which implies the building and effective utilization of skills, is an essential element of any modern development strategy. According to him, the wealth of a nation is as much dependent on the human capital formation as upon the accumulation of material capital. Human capital formation is the acquisition and increase in the stock of people with the skills, education and experience which are critical for orderly development.

When employees are newly recruited in any organization, they have not acquired the greatest efficiency and highest skills they need in performing their duties. They learn on the job or through attending special training and development course either internally or externally organized, either within or outside the country. Newly recruited staff in the service especially junior staffs may possess intellectual skills. They need training even to improve their technical skills.

Training is not given priority in the Nigerian Public Service, this factor as so much in the past and present hindered productivity in the public service. There are central bodies or agencies that are responsible for determining or co-ordinating training efforts in the Public Sector through skeletal. Each department is responsible for identifying training needs, selecting candidate even organizing training and development programme. Some training institutions like Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON), The Institute of Policy and Strategy Studies at Kanu, Centre for Management Development (CMD), Sewican Institute, Maitama, Abuja and Civil Service Institute also in Abuja. But they are new, few considering the size of the Public service.

According to Banjoko (1991), there is apparently no coherence or consistency between public sector training and development programmes either on an inter-departmental or intra-departmental basis. "Even when people go for training, there is usually no systematic evaluation of the training and development programmes or ascertaining what is gained. Therefore when people go for a training course or go to conferences, they are interested in the allowances, estacodes, etc. they get rather than the objectives of the programme, what happens in the private sector is different from what happens in the Public Sector.

Conclusion and Suggestions

The paper examined the performance appraisal as a tool for increased productivity in the Nigerian Public Service. It has underscored the fact that appraisal provides job motivation and increases workers productivity. However, performance appraisal cannot yield maximum productivity if there is no regular check-ins of staff performance, aligned objectives to employees and a fixed time for feedback, to crown it all a time-to-time reward and recognition, remuneration scheme should not be set up, and this will place the Nigerian public service amongst the best in the world. The paper further suggests as follows,

1. One-on-one performance check-ins: Following the footsteps of corporate giant Adobe, who reduces their voluntary turnover by 30%, you should look at introducing one-on-one performance check-ins. Regular performance discussions throughout the year improve

relationship between managers and employees engagement levels and boosting productivity. The traditional approach to performance appraisal has been shown to be a serious waste of time.

2. **Aligned smart objectives:** The importance of setting clear, straightforward employee goals is not disputed. It is essential for employees to create for themselves realistic but stretching goals that will keep them motivated and enthusiastic about the work they are doing. Therefore employee's goals need to be upwardly aligned to company objectives.
3. **Real-time feedback:** Fair and accurate feedback is critical to great performance. Infact, studies have shown that it can increase the rate of performance by a staggering 39%. However, it isn't simply the nature of the feedback that matters-timelines is also an important factor. Real-time feedback has been associated with a number of benefits including increased retention, improved recruitment, better performance and an increased ability to handle change.
4. **Personal Development Plans (PDPS):** According to research, personal development is a key driver of employee performance and engagement. Personal development plans aren't a performance management tool you should pay lip service to, instead employers and managers should create smart PDPs that can be updated and reviewed online throughout the year. By encouraging this in their employers, companies benefit from a workforce who possess a sense of direction and focus in relation to their careers.
5. **Rewards and recognition schemes:** No employee works dust for a paycheck. In fact, it has been shown that 80% of employees work harder when they fell appreciated. Another source shows that 43% of employee would feel more motivated by appreciation than money.

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